

Governance Committee  
of the Russell Library Board of Trustees  
Regular Meeting, February 03, 2021, 5:00 PM  
(Online meeting via Webex)  
Minutes

**Present:** Brandie Doyle (Assistant Director for Administrative Services), Gregory Harris, Jennifer Hadley (recorder), Bryan Skowera (chair)

**Absent:** Thomas Russell IV, Alison Williams

1. Call to Order: Chair Bryan Skowera called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

2. Agenda amendments

Greg moved to amend the Agenda from approval of July minutes to approval of December minutes. Jennifer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2020 Governance Committee Meeting

Greg moved and Bryan seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2020 Governance Committee meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment

No public present.

4. Old Business

a. Board Orientation Materials

- Dear Incoming Trustee letter -- MB&A did not revise so Greg has agreed to help update.
- Trustee Agreement of Responsibilities -- Approved. Jennifer will remove draft status.
- Trustee Action Items - Approved.
- Library leadership information has been updated and library history has been shared.

Bryan has been organizing the Orientation folder and moving older documents to an archival folder. When everything is complete, he will share with the Board.

b. Personnel Policy

Russell Library is undergoing some internal reorganization and will also be filling four vacancies so Brandie will be meeting with Ramona to review how these changes will impact the policy. The committee will revisit the policy at the next meeting.

c. Collection Development/Material Selection Policy

Brandie revised the policy based on suggestions from the committee but chose to keep youth and YA policies separate from general policies. Her reasoning is that there are some distinct considerations for these collections. She clarified that the policy does not necessarily dictate where items are located in the building. She also noted that Russell continues to make

progress in diversifying the collections to reflect the community. Bryan asked that the procedure for requesting review of material be made more accessible, ie., that staff be available to assist any patrons who need help filling out the form. We also suggested adding a sentence to subsections that clarify they are based on the guidelines in the general section except where noted. Brandie will make final revisions and bring the policy to the committee for a vote next month.

## 5. New Business

### a. Anti-Racism Policies and Orientation Materials

Jennifer reported that based on a discussion at the Strategic Planning Committee, Eamonn will discuss anti-racism training for the Board at the next Executive Committee meeting, and the Governance Committee has been asked to look at anti-racism policies and orientation materials. Bryan commented that it is under the Governance Committee's purview to recommend anti-racism policies and orientation materials, but that the Board needs to address anti-racism efforts as a whole.

Brandie said that NCCJ, a regional provider of anti-racism workshops, has been training the staff, but that getting a more local perspective might be useful for the library to more closely align its efforts with the needs of Middletown residents. She and Ramona had already reached out to Diana Martinez and Precious Price of the Middletown Racial Justice Coalition, and they had already recommended the library look at its policies to identify where there are equity issues. The Board could engage Precious and Diana as consultants to review the by-laws and policies and make recommendations, as well as draft an anti-racism policy. This would help center voices from the community. Bryan suggested any proposal include a series of fact-finding meetings with stakeholders, resulting in clearcut suggestions for action. Brandie suggested Precious and Diana could research anti-racism policies in other libraries and then work in collaboration with the Governance Committee. Greg suggested we might need to start with a full audit (e.g., confidential interviews of staff) to identify any problems, and then develop policies to correct them. Brandie agreed that a comprehensive assessment would be good but due to an urgency to begin this work before vacancies and upcoming retirements are filled, there isn't enough time to write grants to fund a large study, such as the one for the strategic plan. Rather, the MRJC could more quickly help us build a framework for ongoing efforts towards more equity. Bryan commented that review could be built into the process, perhaps including interviews, and that the library already must abide by anti-discrimination laws.

We discussed how meetings are organized, and how we might strive to make them more welcoming for participation. The Board loosely uses Robert's Rules. Robert's Rules can help protect participation by individuals, but can also be used to reinforce those in power, disincentivizing people from voicing their opinions and inhibiting open lines of communication.

We talked about discussion guidelines that could set a tone for meetings that would encourage people to participate. Brandie mentioned the Circle Way and Group Agreements. We can bring some examples to the next meeting. Brandie suggested that acquainting new board members with Robert's Rules and how they are used by the library board might help people feel more comfortable engaging during meetings.

Bryan moved that the Governance Committee recommend that the Russell Library Executive Director (or her delegates) should develop a proposal with the Racial Justice Coalition to develop an anti-racism and equity policy as well as conduct a review of existing policies for anti-racism and equity concerns. Jennifer seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

6. Additional Public Comment - no public comment.

7. Meeting Adjournment -- Greg moved and Jennifer seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:20.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Hadley". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jennifer Hadley